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Catholic Religious Education in England and Wales

英倫和威爾斯的天主教宗教教育

John LYDON

[ABSTRACT] This article will, firstly, focus on the Religious Education Curriculum Directory published by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (2012) which states unequivocally that "the primary purpose of Catholic Religious Education is to come to know and understand God's revelation which is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ." The implications of this statement will be unpacked by exploring the centrality of Religious Education (RE) in the curriculum of all Catholic schools, thereby recognising its fundamental role within the overall curriculum of the Catholic school. The extent to which the underpinning methodology of the RE curriculum reflects the Emmaus paradigm and the Catechism of the Catholic Church will be investigated. Specific issues in relation to the RE curriculum will be discussed with explicit reference to major reforms which have taken place recently, especially in terms of examination specifications. The article will then focus on the

importance of the Catholic teachers plays in the formation of students.

Moving from “curriculum to the person of the teacher,” this article will discuss the challenge of the sacramental perspective, namely, that the RE teacher in particular should model his or her ministry on that of Christ, reflecting the value of witness which constitutes a pervasive theme of the Congregation for Catholic Education’s 1988 document, reflected in its assertion that “the effectiveness of religious instruction is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher; this witness is what brings the content of the lessons to life.” This witness is ever more vital in an era when “believing without belonging” represents a defining characteristic of many Catholic families. The article will then discuss a number of challenges to “the centrality of RE” including challenges to religious education from within the wider RE community in England and Wales. The article will conclude by proposing positive shoots of renewal in an era of profound changes across the educational spectrum.

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory

In the life of faith of the Catholic school, religious education plays a central and vital part. At the heart of Catholic education lies the Christian vision of the human person. This vision is expressed and explored in religious education. Therefore religious education is never simply

one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process.¹

The role of Religious Education in the formation of future generations is emphasised strongly in the Congregation for Catholic Education's *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools* (2009). The word "formation" is used 18 times in this letter, linked integrally with an accent on the development of personal and social responsibility:

A concept of the human person being open to the transcendent necessarily includes the element of religious education in schools: it is an aspect of the right to education (cf. c. 799 CIC). Without religious education, pupils would be deprived of an essential element of their formation and personal development, which helps them attain a vital harmony between faith and culture. Moral formation and religious education also foster the development of personal and social responsibility and the other civic virtues; they represent, therefore, an important contribution to the common good of society.²

While the seminal theme of the harmonisation between faith and culture lies at the heart of the Curriculum Directory, encapsulating the fifth element of Thomas Groome's Emmaus paradigm,³ it is made absolutely clear that the primary purpose of Catholic Religious

¹ Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales (CBEW), 2000, 4.

² Congregation for Catholic Education's *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools*, 2009, no.10. Accessed http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_on_ccatheduc_doc_20090505_circ-insegn-relig_en.html

³ Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980).

Education is to come to know and understand God's revelation which is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ:

The Catholic school is 'a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation.' In the person of Christ, the deepest meaning of what it is to be human - that we are created by God and through the Holy Spirit united with Christ in his Incarnation - is discovered. This revelation is known through the scriptures and the tradition of the Church as taught by the Magisterium. Religious Education helps the pupil to know and experience the meaning of this revelation in his or her own life and the life of the community which is the Church. Hence 'the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school.'⁴

The Directory recognizes that parents are the primary educators of their children, resonating with the deeply rooted Western Christian tradition from the time of St Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274).⁵ It does, however, point out that in a contemporary context the school plays a significant role in the formation of students. This was accentuated particularly in the Congregation for Catholic Education's 1988 document which places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of the educational community of which the family is an integral part. While repeating the assertion of *Gravissimum Educationis* that the first and primary educators of children are their parents, the document introduces a note of caution in suggesting that, while

⁴ Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales (CBCEW), 2000, 3.

⁵ See Cristina L. H. Traina, "A Person in the Making: Thomas Aquinas on Children and Childhood," in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

schools are aware of this fact, “unfortunately the same is not always true of the families themselves”.⁶ The document does, nevertheless, maintain that “partnerships between a Catholic school and families must continue and be strengthened not simply to be able to deal with academic problems but rather so that the educational goals of the school can be achieved.”⁷

The Directory maintains a balance throughout between the critical role of the teacher, curriculum content and the underpinning methodology for the teaching of Religious Education. Use of terms such as ‘exploration’, ‘discovery’ and ‘experience’ indicate that the Emmaus Paradigm underpins Religious Education programmes. The post-resurrection account of Jesus’ encounter with two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) constitutes the basis of this paradigm. Groome points out that the Emmaus story has become paradigmatic for people committed to what he describes as a shared praxis approach. The term shared praxis emphasises that growth in Christian faith in essence takes the form of a journey. The term also highlights Groome’s conviction that dialogue between teacher and student must form a central component of all religious education. By adopting this approach Groome sought to ensure that all religious education programmes maintained a balance between the faith tradition of the Catholic Church on the one hand and the experience of students on the other. Such an approach was implicit in the work of, for example, St John Bosco (1815-1888) who emphasised the importance of meeting students at their stage of the faith journey.

The Directory structures the Religious Education curriculum and its assessment around two strands, thereby reflecting the

⁶ Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE), *Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (RDECS)* 1988, 42.

⁷ Ibid.

pedagogy underpinning many subjects within the overall curriculum of Catholic schools:

1. Learning about Religion
2. Learning from Religion

That the Directory uses the term 'critical' 12 times, especially in the context of evaluating critically with their own and others' religious beliefs and world views, would appear to be divergent with the view expressed by Graham McDonough that "in religion, however, the school establishes an environment to transmit factual knowledge about Church teaching to students, but unlike their other subjects does not apply a critical method."⁸ Indeed the pedagogy promoted in the Directory is analogous to that championed by Graham Rossiter, an approach to teaching religious education which "needs more problem-posing content and a critical, student-centred, research-oriented pedagogy."⁹ The notion that the curriculum should be student-centred resonates with the Emmaus Paradigm's starting point, the sharing of the student's own story before being invited to reflect upon the Christian tradition. PHEME PERKINS makes the point that such a student-centred approach is a reflection of Jesus' approach to teaching in His parables:

The parable does not present factual information that a person can receive and remain neutral. Rather it engages us as active participants in the kind of wisdom

⁸ Graham P. McDonough, "Can there be 'faithful dissent' within Catholic religious education in schools," *International Studies in Catholic Education*, Vol. 1, No. 2, ed. G. Grace (London, Routledge, 2009), 189.

⁹ Graham Rossiter, "Reorienting the Religion Curriculum in Catholic schools to address the needs of Contemporary Youth Spirituality," in *International Studies in Catholic Education*, vol.1 no.3, ed. G. Grace (London, Routledge, 2011), 62.

that is to reshape the life of the disciple. In the parables Jesus was struggling for the social imagination of his audience.¹⁰

While highlighting the importance of criticality and dialogue, the Directory places an equal emphasis on the tradition of the Church, particularly in the context of scripture, doctrine and morality. The structure of the areas of study is presented in diagrammatic form as follows:

AREA OF STUDY	VATICAN II	CATECHISM
Revelation	Dei Verbum	Part I : The Profession of Faith
The Church	Lumen Gentium	Part I : The Profession of Faith
Celebration	Sacrosanctum Concilium	Part II : Celebration of the Christian Mystery Part IV : Prayer
Life in Christ	Gaudium et Spes	Part III : Life in Christ

The Directory proceeds to outline in detail the curriculum content for the various Key Stages, constituting a “high-grade pedagogy a serious study of the issues, in the light of up-to-date

¹⁰ Pheme Perkins, *Hearing The Parables of Jesus* (New York, Paulist Press, 1981), 16.

expert information, thereby avoiding uninformed discussion often amounted to little more than sharing ignorant opinions.”¹¹

Specific Issues in relation to the RE Curriculum

The Directory's insistence on the architectonic nature of Religious Education (RE) is exemplified on its insistence that those responsible for RE in all Catholic schools should ensure that 10% of the curriculum to age 16 and 5% of the curriculum beyond the age of 16 is devoted to Religious Education. This prescription was introduced formally following the promulgation of the 1988 Education Act by the Government which “set in train a transformation of our school system, creating more choice and wider opportunities as a springboard to higher standards. Central to this has been the development of school autonomy.” (HM Government 1992:2). The Catholic Bishops Conference, through its National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers, (NBRIA), reacted to this notion of “school autonomy” by calling for 10% of curriculum time for religious education, probably prompted by similar calls for all National Curriculum subjects to have that same time allocation. This prescription has remained constant and is linked to the inspection mechanism for all Catholic schools which are inspected by the Government (Section 5) and by Dioceses (Section 48). The latest framework document for Section 48 inspections reaffirms this

¹¹ Graham Rossiter, “Reorienting the Religion Curriculum in Catholic schools to address the needs of Contemporary Youth Spirituality,” in *International Studies in Catholic Education*, vol.1 no.3, ed. G. Grace (London: Routledge, 2011), 64-65.

stipulation and, in practice, a school cannot be graded ‘outstanding’¹² if RE constitutes less than 10% of overall curriculum time.

Alongside an insistence on 10% of curriculum time being devoted to RE up to the age of 16, NBRIA has taken steps to ensure that the Section 48 inspection mechanism for all Dioceses is more rigorous, analogous to the robustness of the Government’s Section 5 framework. The Section 48 inspection currently reports on the ‘Catholic Life of the School’ and ‘Religious Education’. The inspection of the latter focuses on the following areas:

1. How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education
2. The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education
3. How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

As one of the Senior Inspectors in two Dioceses, I have been involved in a number of inspections recently across a wide range of Secondary schools. The majority of judgements reside in the ‘outstanding’ and ‘good’ categories, following an intensive two-day inspection involving lesson observations, interviews with the head-teacher, the leader of RE, representatives of the governing body and students. The latter tend to be particularly forthcoming on the quality of RE lessons and the impact and influence of the RE teachers. The latter point will be addressed more fully subsequently. With regard to the former NBRIA is currently involved in a pilot project around evaluating quality between inspections, focusing in particular on the extent to which schools engage in a process of

¹² There are four categories in respect of inspection judgements for both Section 5 and Section 48 inspections: ‘Outstanding’, ‘Good’, ‘Requires Improvement’, ‘Inadequate’. The latter two categories have incrementally challenging consequences for Catholic schools.

self-evaluation between inspections. Resonating with the primacy of the Church's mission to the 'poor'¹³ there is a focused emphasis during inspections on how effective leadership and management is in identifying and supporting disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils who are gifted and talented in Religious Education so that their progress is maximised.

There is an equally concentrated accent on how effective leadership and management is in identifying generic causes of underachievement (such as the quality of teaching and assessment, the appropriateness of the curriculum, etc.) and managing these in order to eradicate barriers to learning for all pupils. This latter aspect reflects two of the key characteristics, the dignity of the individual and the search for excellence, outlined by the Bishops Conference of England & Wales (1996), recognising that academic standards are integral to Catholic distinctiveness in ensuring that a holistic perspective to education is adopted in all Catholic schools.

In concluding this first section on the RE curriculum, reference must be made to the recent reform of the examination system in England and Wales. One of the key developments revolves around the Government's insistence that 25% of the syllabus at Key Stage 4 would have to be allocated to a second religion, reflecting a desire for a more inclusive curriculum to counter a perceived exclusivity within certain schools with a religious character. The RE Curriculum of Catholic schools has consistently included the study of one world religion within each key stage.¹⁴ The problem was then somewhat

¹³ cf. Vatican Council II, *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis* (London, CTS, 1965), 9.

¹⁴ The General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) is taken at the end of Key Stage 4 (Ages 14-16).

simplified because the Bishops Conference further detailed that Judaism should be the religion chosen for fairly obvious theological if not sociological or political reasons. Whereas this caused a stir in the media with Catholic schools being accused of not teaching Islam (patently untrue, it is taught at KS3), one unintended consequence may be the development of more concentrated expertise in Judaism at both diocesan and national levels.

The Sacramental Perspective

In contrast to the scholarly articles referenced previously, there is an emphasis in all Congregation and Bishops Conference on the centrality of the role of the RE teacher. I would suggest that *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* represents the seminal Congregation document in the context of the teaching of RE. The document discusses a range of issues in relation to the religious dimension of schools including young people in a changing world, the religious dimension of the school climate and what it describes as religious instruction and formation. In discussing the nature of the teacher, a word that appears 89 times, the document is unequivocal in asserting the integral nature of the professional and personal witness of the RE teacher:

The religion teacher is the key, the vital component, if the educational goals of the school are to be achieved. But the effectiveness of religious instruction is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher; this witness is what brings the content of the lessons to life. Teachers of religion, therefore, must be men and women endowed with many gifts, both natural and supernatural, who are also capable of giving witness to these gifts;

they must have a thorough cultural, professional, and pedagogical training, and they must be capable of genuine dialogue.¹⁵

There are 21 references to 'witness' in this document, encapsulating the sacramental perspective, a permeating theme through the Congregation's documents which, in essence, deepen the principles of the Second Vatican Council. In the context of the Catholic school the sacramental perspective is a dominant paradigm within the theological framework of the Second Vatican Council. By engaging in the ministry of teaching, the individual Christian is responding to his or her primary call to be a disciple of Jesus in a distinctive manner, reflecting the notion of charisms being a concrete realisation of the universal gift of God through Christ to all the baptized.¹⁶ This fundamental calling demands that all teachers model their ministry on that of Christ. Teachers are, in effect, signs of the presence of Christ within their educational community. As Parker J Palmer puts it, they "teach who they are".¹⁷

The Declaration on Christian Education of the Second Vatican Council encapsulates the notions of witness, sacramental perspective and community in its encouragement to teachers to recognise:

..... that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs¹⁸.....

¹⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, London, CTS (1988), 96.

¹⁶ See p.80 ff. Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, London, CTS (1988).

¹⁷ Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1998), 2.

¹⁸ Cf. Pope Pius XI, Encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 80 ff.;

Pope Pius XII's allocution to the Catholic Association of Italian Teachers in Secondary Schools, Jan. 5, 1954: Discourses and Radio Messages, 15, pp. 551-55B;

Pope John XXIII's allocution to the 6th Congress of the Associations of Catholic Italian

Intimately linked in charity to one another and to their students and endowed with an apostolic spirit, **may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher.**¹⁹

The imperative to bear witness is extended to all members of the school community in *The Catholic School*, published twelve years later:

Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. His revelation gives new meaning to life and helps man to direct his thought, action and will according to the Gospel, making the beatitudes his norm of life. **The fact that in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision,** makes the school ‘Catholic’; principles of the Gospel in this manner become the educational norms since the school then has them as its internal motivation and final goal.²⁰

This statement encapsulates the meaning of the sacramental perspective in so far as it places Christ at the centre of the school and confirms that the way in which members of the school community share in that vision is integral to the distinctive nature of the Catholic School. The significance of the role of teachers in realising this vision is articulated further in later documents. At this stage it is worth stating that the role of teachers is, in essence, twofold. In the first place teachers, and especially RE teachers, are called to educate young people in the faith by articulating the Christian message. More

Teachers Sept. 5, 1959: Discourses, Messages, Conversations, 1, Rome, 1960, pp. 427-431.

¹⁹ Vatican Council II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, no.8, www.vatican.va (emphasis inserted)

²⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* (London, CTS, 1977), 34 (emphasis inserted).

importantly, however, teachers proclaim the Christian vision by the way in which they are witnesses to the Good News, stated memorably in the following statement by Pope Paul VI:

Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses..... It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus²¹

Building on previous documents, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* referred to previously consistently emphasises integral human formation reflecting the programmes of formation espoused by the Salesians and the Sisters of Mercy among other religious orders.²² By making a connection with an emphasis on the call to seek perfection formation is rooted firmly in the context of the sacramental perspective since the teacher is called to model his or her life on "the living presence of Jesus the 'Master' who, today as always, is with us in our journey through life as the one genuine 'Teacher', the perfect Man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection."²³

The document makes clear that such formation is central to the promotion of a distinctive Catholic culture or 'habitus' and, in this context, the personal example of teachers is crucial in modelling what integral human formation will look like. There is a powerful

²¹ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, <http://www.vatican.va>.

²² See John Lydon, *The Contemporary Catholic Teacher* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011), 111ff.

²³ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (RDECS) (London, CTS, 1988), 25.

assertion that “prime responsibility” for creating and maintaining the distinctive atmosphere of a Catholic school rests with the teachers, both as individuals and acting collegially. The way in which teachers create such a culture will be through their daily witness, to the extent that, without such witness, “there is little left which can make the school Catholic.”²⁴

What has been stated thus far on the sacramental perspective could be applied, to a large extent, to all Catholic teachers. The 1988 document does, however, in the context of the RE teacher place a considerable accent on modelling faith, cited 76 times in this document. One of its distinctive features in relation to the teacher is its emphasis on teachers working collaboratively. When speaking of lay teachers working alongside priests and religious, the document also links faith, witness and community in suggesting that “lay teachers contribute their competence and their faith witness to the Catholic school.” (n.37) This witness of the lived faith of teachers should be modelled Christ and should, therefore, have a profound effect on the lives of students:

Most of all, students should be able to recognize authentic human qualities in their teachers. They are teachers of the faith; however, like Christ, they must also be teachers of what it means to be human. (n.96)

The Sacramental Perspective in Wider Literature

The sacramental perspective constitutes a key theme in wider literature on Catholic education. John Sullivan has written extensively on Catholic education and he maintains that the integral

²⁴ Ibid., 26.

formation of the human person and Christ as the foundation of the whole educational enterprise constitute two of the five key themes permeating the documents emanating from the Congregation.²⁵ Sullivan insists that developing a relationship with Christ should be real rather than virtual, the relationship being "embodied and witnessed to by the teachers in order to ensure that children receive an appropriate formation."²⁶

Sullivan takes up the theme that witness forms a constituent element of any programme of formation in *Living Logos*. Building on the incarnational theme of Chapter One of St John's Gospel, that Christ is the Word (Greek 'logos') of God who became flesh in order to reveal God's nature, Sullivan suggests that school leaders "embody the key meanings of the school and the significance of its work." He then goes on to address the role of teachers, suggesting that the character, habits and attitudes of the teacher are of equal significance to the roles they perform in the context of the formation of pupils.²⁷

In his more recent writings,²⁸ Sullivan places the vocation to teach in the context of discipleship. While recognising that several types of educational vision would claim to promote the holistic

²⁵ John Sullivan lists three further recurring themes: 1. Maintaining a synthesis between faith and culture; 2. The autonomy of the various disciplines; 3. The development of the critical faculties of pupils. His extensive treatment of the first two principles compared with the last three would indicate the relative significance he attaches to the former. See John Sullivan, *Catholic Education: Distinctive and Inclusive* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publications, 2001).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁷ John Sullivan, *Living Logos: A Challenge for Catholic School Leaders* (St Mary's University College, Twickenham, 2002). It was published originally as part of the Readings for the MA in Catholic School Leadership.

²⁸ See, for example, John Sullivan, "Vocation and Profession in Teacher Education," in *The Foundation of Hope: Turning Dreams into Reality* ed. R. John Elford (Liverpool: Liverpool Hope University, 2004).

development of students²⁹, placing such development in the context of discipleship makes Christian education distinctive. In order to be able to demonstrate to students what discipleship looks like, it is essential, according to Sullivan, that there should be no distinction between having a vocation and being a professional, both being essential components of the pathway of discipleship.

Ronald Nuzzi, writing on the 25th anniversary of the publication *To Teach As Jesus Did* by the USA Bishops Conference,³⁰ makes it clear that he is focusing primarily on school leadership.³¹ However, his article is replete with references to the term ‘witness’, particularly in the context of servant leadership which models that of Jesus the Servant as opposed to secular counterparts which appear to colonise religious language while claiming to be original.³² Modeling one’s life on Jesus as servant is, therefore, not rooted simply in the desire to serve others, however empathetically, but, rather, “in response to hearing Christ’s command to serve.”³³ Nuzzi then goes on to make

²⁹ The secular meaning of vocation has a prominent place in John Dewey’s philosophy of education. John Dewey (1859-1952) was an American philosopher and educator whose writings and teachings have had profound influences on education and, in particular, vocational education. While for many of his contemporaries vocational education meant education in the “blue collar” sense, Dewey spoke of a person’s vocation as that which makes that person distinctive and gives life-direction. Dewey described teaching as a distinctive and noble calling, retaining an element of the Reformers’ theology of vocation when using terms such as servant and prophet to describe the teacher’s role in transforming lives. See Dworkin, Martin S., ed., *Dewey on Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1959).

³⁰ National Conference of Catholic Bishops USA, *To Teach As Jesus Did* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Bishops, 1972). This document, in essence, spoke of the ministry of teaching in terms of a ministry modelled on the life of Jesus the Teacher, resonating with the concept of the sacramental perspective articulated in this article. The document does not, however, use the term sacramental perspective.

³¹ Rev Ronald J. Nuzzi, “To Lead as Jesus Led,” in *Catholic Education, A Journal of Enquiry and Practice* (Dayton, Ohio: University of Dayton, 2004).

³² See, for example, Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977). There is no reference to the person of Jesus in the “Ten Principles of Servant Leadership” listed by the Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership. See <http://www.butler.edu>.

³³ Rev. Ronald J. Nuzzi, “To Lead as Jesus Led,” 264.

similar claims in the context of modeling the school community on that established by Jesus accompanied by his first disciples.

Reference to servant leadership in the context of the teacher of RE is especially apposite in an England & Wales context. There is a deeply embedded tradition within many Catholic schools of teachers engaging in extra-curricular activities, thereby building relationships with students beyond the classroom which lead to an enrichment of the dialogue between teacher and student in formal classroom contexts. This tradition emanated, to a large extent, from the contribution of religious orders responsible from the outset for the initial development of the Catholic Church's education mission following the emergence of mass education in England and Wales in the mid-nineteenth century. While an extensive discussion on the relationship between RE and extra-curricular activities is beyond the scope of this article, one recent survey among students in a Secondary school in the south-east of England placed RE as the leading subject across a range of criteria. An analysis of the data revealed that the principal reasons were the relationships built-up in extra-curricular activities, many focusing on their faith journey, leading to deeply empowering relationships between teachers and students and the inspirational nature of the teamwork modelled by the RE teachers. This latter point resonates with the importance of "adult solidarity around the department and school mission", a central feature of Anthony Bryk's inspirational ideology of Catholic schools.

Challenges to the Centrality of Religious Education

This section of the article will navigate the challenges from without and within the Religious education community.

“Believing without Belonging”

In today’s post-Vatican II Church what it means to belong to anything has changed. In her seminal work, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*,³⁴ Grace Davie suggests that Europe is marked by a culture of “believing without belonging”, characterised by a profound mismatch between religious values that people profess (believing), and actual churchgoing and religious practice (belonging). Davie was writing around the time of major European values surveys.³⁵ Kerkhofs has spoken of a shift away from the tradition as the yardstick by which to interpret the meaning of life and to define moral rules with identity being found through flexible adaptation.

More recently Lieven Boeve³⁶ described the situation in Belgium as, in a relatively short period of time, having secularised and evolved from a culture and society with a nearly total Catholic horizon of meaning to a situation where this horizon determines to a much smaller and lesser degree the identity construction of individuals and groups Boeve’s description has been replicated in several other European countries to a greater or lesser extent including the UK and Ireland. Anne Hession,³⁷ reflecting on Boeve’s

³⁴ Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

³⁵ cf. Jan Kerkhofs, “Will The Churches Meet the Europeans?” *The Tablet* (London: The Tablet Publishing Company, 1993).

³⁶ Lieven Boeve, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

³⁷ Anne Hession, *Catholic Primary Religious Education in a Pluralist Environment* (Dublin: Veritas, 2015).

work from an Irish perspective, speaks of the complex nature of identity formation in a context "influenced by the forces of modernisation and globalisation." She speaks of people "integrating multiple perspectives and contradictory rationalities into a more reflexive, contextual and plural identity."

In the context of England & Wales, especially in the context of Mass attendance, Fr Christopher Jamison speaks of a "not wholly mythical golden era" when "every Catholic boy and every Catholic girl would, at some stage of their education, consider becoming a priest or a nun." He describes this era as a totally Catholic culture which, in the context of Catholic education, was strengthened by the 1944 Education Act which, building on previous Education Acts, enabled every Catholic child to attend a Catholic school free of charge. Jamison suggests that this total Catholic culture [embracing Church Youth Clubs, sports teams as well as Catholic schools] underpinned by strong family cultural support began to die in the 1960's and disappeared by the 1980's. He cites the statistics for Mass attendance which halved between 1980 and 2000 to around 1 million as evidence of this disappearance. This reflects a transition, described by the Catholic sociologist Mary Douglas³⁸, from a "group" (tightly-knit Catholic identity) to a grid mentality religion becomes more ego-based: God is less a revelation to be obeyed than a source of comfort for the self. Faith becomes a matter of individual needs with religion becoming privatised, merely a part of a person's need for self-fulfilment. The fact that people opt out of formal structures of belonging is of particular relevance to the spiritual challenge for Catholic school leaders going forward. As George Weigel points out

³⁸ Mary Douglas, *Essays in the Sociology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

in his new book, *Evangelical Catholicism*,³⁹ our post-modern culture is toxic to the Christian message. We can no longer expect the faith to be passed on by cultural osmosis. He writes that “the cultural Catholicism of the past was ‘comfortable’ because it fit neatly within the ambient public culture, causing little chafing between one’s life ‘in the Church’ and one’s life in the world.”

This “grid” mentality resonates with Philip Hughes’ description of the challenge for RE teachers in an Australian context:

If Catholic schools are to offer an education in spirituality that is relevant to the lives of pupils, then there is a need to understand and acknowledge their changed spiritual situation: for many, but not all, it is relatively secular, eclectic, subjective, individualistic and self reliant; there is a strong interest in achieving a desirable lifestyle but little interest in connection with the church.⁴⁰

In this “grid” culture the witness of the teacher is essential if religious education in Catholic schools is to make any real impact. I contend that the commitment of a core group of Catholic teachers articulate their faith *and* witness to that faith is essential. This contention is supported in Richard Rymarz & Angelo Belmonte’s life history narratives of religious education coordinators in Catholic schools, again in an Australian context, who found that strong religious commitment, manifested by taking leadership positions in Catholic schools, as becoming increasingly contested. They speak of the importance of a strong element of witness and cite Melanie

³⁹ George Weigel, *Evangelical Catholicism: Deep Reform in the 21st Century Church* (New York: Basic, 2013), 19.

⁴⁰ Philip Hughes, *Putting Life Together: Findings from Australian Youth Spirituality Research* (Fairfield, VIC: Fairfield Press, 2007), 12.

Morey and John Pideret’s insistence on the capacity to ‘animate’ religious identity rather than just acquiesce to it:

The vibrancy of organizational culture requires knowledge about content, its beliefs and its shared assumptions and norms. Cultural knowledge alone, however, it is not enough to sustain the vitality of organizational culture beyond the present generation. Cultural inheritability in a group or organization requires significant levels of commitment from the community of cultural catalysts and citizens in order for there to be any chance it will appeal to the future generations required to sustain it. Commitment connects what a person wants to do with what he or she is supposed to do.⁴¹

Challenges from Within the Wider RE Community – Three Reports

In relatively recent years three reports from the RE community beyond the Catholic schools have presented a varying degree of challenge to the Catholic Church position on RE outlined in the Directory. In *A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools*⁴² Charles Clarke (a former Secretary of State for Education) and Linda Woodhead (an academic from the University of Lancaster) contextualised the situation in Britain in relation to religion and

⁴¹ Melanie M. Morey and John J. Piderit, S.J., *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis*, 2006, 271. Cited in Richard Rymarz and Angelo Belmonte, “Some Life History Narratives of Religious Education Coordinators in Catholic schools,” *International Studies in Catholic Education* 6.2 (2014): 191-200.

⁴² Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead, *A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools* (London: Arts & Humanities Research Council, 2015).

belief. The highlights included that roughly equal numbers of younger people in Britain today report having ‘no religion’ as report having a religion and decline in the numbers of people affiliating with mainstream churches, an increase in the numbers of different religions being practised and a hollowing out of the religious middle allowing the promotion of extremist views at either end of the spectrum. Their proposals to counter these challenges include:

- Schools should no longer be required to hold daily acts of Christian worship
- The RE curriculum should be broadened to reflect the reality of the contemporary pluralist society
- A Nationally Agreed Syllabus should be established by a national SACRE
- “We believe that there is a good case for extending this syllabus....to all maintained schools”

The latter proposal would be unacceptable to the Catholic Church and would contravene the unique agreement with the Government in 1847 which, in essence, affords autonomy to the Bishops in respect of all aspects relating to the teaching of RE. The imposition of a national syllabus on all maintained schools would contravene this agreement.

A second report emanated from the Commission on Religion & Belief in Public Life (CORAB)⁴³ which noted that schools with a religious character are not only permitted to select pupils on the grounds of religion, but they are also exempt from aspects of employment legislation, in that they may use religion as a criterion

⁴³ CORAB (Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life) ‘Living with Difference’ Report (Cambridge, Woolf Institute, 2015).

when hiring staff. The Commission suggested that there are concerns about the extent of this privilege and about the justification for it and that Government should ensure the practice of exemption is monitored effectively and the correct processes observed; whilst, if it is abused, the law should be changed to restrict its application further. In the context of the teaching of RE in Catholic schools, any attempt to revoke what is termed a general occupational requirement that teachers of RE should be Catholic would have serious ramifications for the teaching of the subject.

A third report written by Andrew Dinham and Martha Shaw entitled *RE for Real*⁴⁴ recommended, in line with the Clarke-Woodhead report, that a statutory National Framework for Religion and Belief Learning should be developed, and be applicable to all schools, balancing shared national approaches with school level determination. While the advocating of a framework rather than a syllabus “with school level determination” is more positive in terms of Catholic RE, the report remains a challenge in that it raises public consciousness to question the privileges afforded currently to the Catholic RE community. There is also the issue of how a national framework can be balanced with school-level determination. How would the curriculum development process be managed and who would be involved?

⁴⁴ Adam Dinham, and Martha Shaw, *RE for Real: The Future of Teaching and Learning about Religion and Belief* (London, Goldsmith’s University of London, 2015).

Positive Shoots of Renewal

Two recent developments at national level have, to an extent, ameliorated the challenges articulated above. In the first place the Catholic Church has been involved from the outset in determining the content and assessment of the new examinations which take place at the end of Key Stage 4 (16 years). Key figures from within the Catholic RE community nationally⁴⁵ engaged with Examination Boards and publishers to ensure that the content reflected the requirements of the Directory and to quality assure the published textbooks which were written by them in collaboration with serving practitioners. Second the setting up of an Independent Commission on RE nationally will include the voice of the Catholic community as it strives to reach a consensus on the way forward for the teaching of RE.

Final Reflection

The overarching outcome of Religious Education is expressed by the Directory as follows:

The outcome of excellent Religious Education is religiously literate and engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills – appropriate to their age and capacity – to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

The words ‘commitment’ and ‘engaged’ are of particular significance. Cardinal Basil Hume, speaking about spiritual development, insisted that:

⁴⁵ Dr Anthony Towey, an academic at St Mary’s University and Philip Robinson, National RE Adviser appointed by the Bishops Conference.

I do not believe that an adult can awaken in a young person a sense of the spiritual if that adult is not at least well on the way to discovering the spiritual dimension of his or her own life. I do not mean that a teacher has necessarily to have found the spiritual meaning to their life, but that spiritual questions must have become real for them. Indeed, in this as in other areas, the best teachers are those who are still learning.⁴⁶

Cardinal Hume is stating basically that “you cannot give what you have not got.” Students are acutely aware of the extent to which teachers are committed to their faith and actually believe what they are teaching, reflecting the centrality of witness inherent in the sacramental perspective. I am convinced, based on inspection evidence across two large Dioceses in England, that the following quotation from *The Distinctive Curriculum of the Catholic School* constitutes an appropriate conclusion to this article:

It is the teacher who is able to connect with and convey an optimistic, Catholic understanding of life and of the human person, referred to as ‘a positive anthropology’. It is important that the teacher gives hope and inspiration to the young. So the teacher must reflect on what they bring of themselves to their work. It is vital then that the school gives time and resources to support the personal and professional development of its teachers and staff, to help them know what they bring of themselves and of their gifts to the work of the Catholic school.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Cardinal Basil Hume, “The Nature of Spiritual and Moral Development,” in *Partners in Mission*, ed. Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales (London: Catholic Education Service, 1997), 83-93.

⁴⁷ National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA), *The Distinctive Curriculum of the Catholic School* (Luton, NBRIA, 2009).

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【摘要】本文旨在分析由天主教英倫和威爾斯主教團出版的宗教教育課程指引（2012）。指引毫不含糊地指出，「天主教宗教教育的主要目的在於認識和明白天主的啟示，而這啟示在耶穌基督身上滿全。」這句說話透過探討天主教學校宗教課程的核心得以展現，從而確認這概念在天主教學校整體課程中的基礎角色。本文亦探討宗教教育課程背後的方法如何反映「厄瑪烏教學法」和天主教教理。本文亦會引用近期一些重大改革來討論宗教教育課程中的一些問題。同時，文章亦討論了天主教教師在培育學生方面的重要角色。

由課程到教師本人，本文探討了聖事的挑戰，即宗教教師尤應在職務中仿效基督，從而反映一個貫穿天主教教育部在1988年出版的文件中的主題——見證的價值。文件中提出，「宗教教育的有效性與教師的個人見證有密切關係；該見證為課堂的內容賦予生命。」該見證在「沒有歸屬的信仰」的年代中尤其重要，當中大多數天主教家庭都屬於這型態。然後，本文討論了「宗教教育的核心」所面對的挑戰，包括英倫和威爾斯的宗教團體中的宗教教育所面對的挑戰。最後，本文會就教育界重大改變中提出正面革新的建議。